Library Literacy Skills Among the Users of Gram Panchayat Libraries in Vijayapura District: A study

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1. Introduction

The concept of Information Literacy plays a crucial role in empowering individuals, particularly in rural areas, by enabling them to access, evaluate, and use information effectively. In the context of Gram Panchayat Libraries in Karnataka, particularly in the Vijayapur District, information literacy skills are critical for enhancing the utility of library resources, services, and facilities that are often underutilized. Despite the existence of a vast network of rural libraries, including 5766 Gram Panchayat libraries, many communities are still unaware of the full potential these libraries offer. This lack of awareness and understanding of how to find the way and leverage available resources severely limits the positive impact these libraries could have on the socio-economic development of rural populations.The Karnataka Public Libraries Act of 1965**,** which led to the establishment of the current library network, has laid the foundation for an integrated system of libraries across the state. However, Gram Panchayat libraries, which serve as the most accessible form of knowledge hubs for rural communities, often face challenges related to financial constraints, limited infrastructure**,** and low user engagement. These challenges are compounded by a lack of information literacy among rural library users. Many individuals in these communities lack the skills needed to efficiently navigate library resources and access information on important topics such as health, agriculture, employment opportunities, and government schemes—all of which are vital to improving their quality of life.

2. Growth of Public Library in India:

The modern concept of a public library in India was introduced during the British colonial period, and the development of public libraries in cities such as Bombay, Madras and

Calcutta helped pave the way for future library development from the early nineteenth century. It has existed in India since ancient times, acting as repositories of knowledge in rulers, temples, universities and courts. The development of public libraries in the country accelerated during the post-independence period, the Madras Public Library Act was passed in 1948. After independent India's first library inscription providing public library service. Since independence 28 states and 6 Union Territories have enacted Public Library Acts.

A public library is a non-profit organization that was established for the benefit of the public and is primarily funded by public funding. It offers free services to anyone, regardless of their age, ethnicity, gender, social, economic, or educational background. Education, information, entertainment, aesthetics, and research are the five main purposes of all types of libraries.

Public libraries are vital to a democratic society serve as societal equalizers, providing information resources and services to all people regardless of socioeconomic status, disability, or location (Nzivo, 2012). Public library known as social institution (Martin, 1937) serves as a medium to deal with social problems. The important aim and objective of a public library is to provide access to information, education, personal development, computer training program, careers services, job fairs etc through a variety of resources and services uniformly available to all publics with irrespective of race, religion, nationality, language, gender, age, disability, economic and employment status and educational background (Carol, 2001). The history of the development of the public library may be said to be as old as that of education in India (Ekbote, 1987). Public libraries in India made a remarkable growth in the post independence of India (Bajpai & Jyoti Kumar, 2015). Public libraries are people-oriented institutions (Ghosh, 2005); people are interested in new resources and services, which should serve as a social, cultural, economic, educational, recreational center for the community. In this context the present study focuses on use of sources and services of public library by users.

3. Public library system in Karnataka:

Karnataka has a comprehensive public library network encompassing various levels: State Central Library, District Central Libraries, City Central Libraries, Branch Libraries, Mobile Libraries, and Gram Panchayat Libraries. This network is established under the Karnataka Public Libraries Act, 1965. The digitization of libraries is also underway, with plans to provide digital resources and access to students and the public.

4. Public library networking system in Karnataka:

- **State Central Library:** - It is an apex Public Library equipped with reference books and source books in all languages on all subjects. Copyright, Computer, browsing section, Braille Books, career information, periodicals sections are some of the important sections of the library City Central Libraries:-Under the Karnataka Public Library Act, 1965 there are 26 City Central Libraries with branch libraries serving in the State. The Bangalore City Central Libraries have been bifurcated into 5 zones. Namely East, West, North, South and Central for the smooth administration. As 198 Wards are there in Bangalore. Among these Wards Branch Libraries are functioning and providing service to the public.

District Central Libraries:- There are 30 Districts Libraries in the State as per the section 16(1)(b) of Karnataka Public Libraries Act, 1965. Its 703 branch Libraries are serving the Public. In all district centres which has city central libraries in the city and District Central library's offices only.

- **Mobile Libraries**:- There are 4 mobile Libraries functioning, to inculcate the reading habit to the public at their own door steps in different parts of the City in the State. This has been accepted as a popular library service rendered by the Department.

Gram Panchayat Libraries (Aravu Kendra):- There are 5766 Gram Panchayat Libraries in the State. These libraries are helping to a great extent to our rural community. It is of first time in India to have the Libraries in all the gram panchayats. These libraries are now coming under the control of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, Government of Karnataka.".

5.Gram Panchayat libraries system in Vijayapua district:

In Vijayapur District, 211 Gram Panchayat libraries, where rural communities are often geographically isolated**,** Gram Panchayat Libraries and Information Centres hold great promise in bridging the gap between knowledge and rural development**.** However, these libraries are often underused due to a lack of awareness and limited information literacy among potential users. As a result, even though these libraries may house valuable information, the communities they serve are often unable to tap into the full potential of the resources available. This problem highlights the need for focused efforts to enhance information literacy among rural populations, enabling them to make the most of the services these libraries offer.

6. Need for the study

The study titled **library Literacy Skills Among the Users of Gram Panchayat Libraries in Vijayapura District :A study** aims to explore the level of information literacy among the users of Gram Panchayat libraries in this region and identify the gaps that hinder effective utilization of library resources. The study will assess the awareness**,** skills**,** and

practices of library users regarding the use of information sources, services, and facilities available at the Gram Panchayat libraries. It will also explore how information literacy programs could be implemented to enhance the ability of users to find, assess, and use information more effectively.

By focusing on information literacy, this study seeks to equip rural communities in Vijayapur with the skills needed to unlock the potential of their local libraries, thus enabling them to access vital information that could improve their livelihoods, health, education, and overall socio-economic development. The findings of this study are expected to inform policymakers, librarians, and development organizations on how to better engage rural populations, enhance library services, and promote a culture of lifelong learning in rural Karnataka.

7.Definition of key terms

Information Literacy: Information literacy refers to the ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and use that information effectively and ethically. It involves a set of skills and knowledge necessary to find reliable sources, assess their credibility, and apply the information appropriately in various contexts such as academics, work, or daily life.

According to the **American Library Association (ALA, 2000)**:

"Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."

Literacy skills: The users of gram panchayath libraries need basic literacy skills like read write and communicate effectively. They need basic literacy about the library system, especially, information sources, services and facilities of gram panchayath in vijayapura district

Information sources:

Information sources of a Gram Panchayat are the various formal and informal sources through which the gram Panchayat library users collect information especially Reference books, Novels, short stories, government gazettes , digital resources etc.

Information services:

Information services of a Gram Panchayat are the various services through which they can provide information to the users of gram panchayath in Vijayapura district.

Facilities : The facilities available for the users of the gram panchayat in Vijayapura district.

Gram Panchayat libraries :

Gram Panchayat libraries, are the libraries geographically located at Vijayapura district to service the information needs and requirement of rural community

8. Literature Review

Information literacy has become a foundational skill in the 21st century, crucial not only for academic success but also for informed decision-making and lifelong learning (ALA, 2000). According to Bruce (1997), information literacy involves more than technical skills; it includes critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to evaluate and apply information in real-life contexts. In rural India, where formal education levels may be lower and access to digital tools limited, promoting information literacy is especially important.

Public libraries, particularly those at the grassroots level like **Gram Panchayat libraries**, are critical for supporting information access in rural communities (IFLA, 2013). These libraries act as centres for reading, learning, and accessing government services. However, several studies have pointed out that the use of rural libraries remains low due to lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and limited user skills (Ravi & Sharma, 2019; Sinha, 2021).

The National Mission on Libraries (NML), launched by the Government of India, emphasizes modernizing public libraries and enhancing community engagement. Yet, research suggests that many users of Gram Panchayat libraries are not equipped with the necessary information literacy skills to take full advantage of available services (Mohan, 2020). Digital literacy also

remains a significant challenge, with many rural users unfamiliar with computers, the internet, and digital content evaluation.

Despite these challenges, initiatives that combine library outreach with basic digital and information literacy training have shown positive results. Studies indicate that when rural users are empowered with the right skills, their ability to access, use, and benefit from information improves significantly (Kumar & Bansal, 2022).

This literature highlights the need to assess and enhance the information literacy skills of rural library users to ensure that the full potential of Gram Panchayat libraries is realized.

9. Statement of problem:

Library Literacy Skills Among the Users of Gram Panchayat Libraries in Vijayapura district: a study

10. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of information literacy skills among the users of Gram Panchayat libraries in vijayapura district
2. To examine the usage patterns of information sources, services, and facilities available in Gram Panchayat libraries.
3. To identify the challenges and barriers faced by users in accessing and utilizing library resources effectively.
4. To evaluate the role of library staff and infrastructure in supporting information literacy among rural users.
5. To suggest practical strategies and recommendations for enhancing information literacy and improving the effectiveness of library services in rural areas.

11. Need of the Study

In the age of digital information and knowledge-based development, the ability to access, evaluate, and use information effectively—referred to as **information literacy**—is essential for personal, educational, and socio-economic growth. While urban populations often have better access to digital tools and trained support, rural communities continue to face significant challenges in acquiring and utilizing information sources and services due to

lack of awareness, poor infrastructure, and limited literacy levels.. However, the full benefits of these services can only be realized if the users possess adequate information literacy skills towards information sources, services and facilities in gram panchayat libraries in vijayapura district.

Many Studies have shown that many rural library users are unaware of the resources available to them or lack the skills to use them efficiently. Moreover, the underutilization of library services and facilities suggests a gap between availability and accessibility, often rooted in insufficient information literacy. This highlights the need for a systematic assessment of how users interact with library resources and what challenges they face.

This study is needed understand the current level of information literacy among Gram Panchayat library users, Identify gaps and barriers in accessing library services. Provide insights for developing targeted training and outreach programs.,Support efforts to bridge the rural-urban information divide and promote inclusive access to knowledge. this research will contribute to strengthening rural information systems and ensuring that Gram Panchayat libraries function as true knowledge hubs for their communities. No studies have been conducted especially on this topic in vijayapura district. Hence the proposed study have been taken for investigation.

12. Methodology

This study will adopt a survey research design to assess the information literacy skills of users and their engagement with the resources and services provided by Gram Panchayat libraries in vijayapura district. The survey approach is suitable for collecting quantitative and qualitative data regarding users' awareness, usage patterns, and challenges faced. The study will be conducted in Gram Panchayat libraries located in rural areas in vijayapur district . All registered and regular users in Gram Panchayat libraries.A structured questionnaire will be design and distribute to users to gather data on their information literacy levels, usage of library sources, services, and facilities. Some important government institution are Maintaining valid data and are to be used for Valid evaluation.

13. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The present study is restricted to information literacy towards Information Sources, Services, and Facilities among the Users of Gram Panchayat Libraries in Vijayapura district. The study will be confided to the only gram panchayat libraries. Further it will restricted to Vijayapura district only to assess their awareness level, extent of use and level of satisfaction about the information sources, services and facilities available in these libraries. The study is further aims to assess the information literacy skills of library usage and literacy levels.The study targets regular users of the Gram Panchayat libraries, including students, teachers, farmers, homemakers, and other local residents who use library services. The study specifically explores three main areas:Information literacy skills (ability to find, evaluate, and use information),Utilization of information sources (books, newspapers, etc),Use of library services and facilities (lending, internet access, , reading spaces).The study aims to assess current literacy levels, identify usage patterns, and suggest strategies to enhance rural information access and digital empowerment through libraries.

Chapterization:

The present study will be organized into five chapters as presented below.

CHAPTER-1:

In this chapter set the foundation for the entire research. It began by exploring the recent context of research problem. Identify the gap or issue. This chapter emphasises and importance and significance of the problem on Information Literacy towards information sources, services and facilities in gram panchayath libraries in Vijayapura district. It also covers statement of the problem, objectives, scope, limitations, hypotheses and definition of key terms is covered. At the end chapter organization of the study will be given

CHAPTER-2: Gives about an overview is Gram Panchayat libraries system and collection sources and services of in vijayapura district.

CHAPTER-3: This chapter covers a brief review of related literature for the study. This includes report of the past studies conducted on public library system, public library in India and in Karnataka about information sources, information service and facilities.

CHAPTER-4: In this chapter the detail analyses and interpretation and their results will be presented.

CHAPTER-5: Covers the major findings of the study, summary, suggestions and conclusions of the study.

14. Conclusion

In an era where access to information is a key driver of social and economic development, the role of rural libraries—especially Gram Panchayat libraries—has become increasingly important. These libraries act as community knowledge centers, providing not only books and reading materials but also access to digital resources and government services. However, the effective use of these resources depends largely on the information literacy skills of the users.This study emphasizes the need to assess and strengthen the ability of rural citizens to identify, access, evaluate, and use information effectively. The findings are expected to reveal the current status of information literacy among users, highlight the extent of engagement with available library services, and uncover key challenges such as lack of awareness, digital illiteracy, and infrastructural limitations. By identifying these gaps, the study aims to provide practical recommendations for improving user engagement and enhancing the role of Gram Panchayat libraries as inclusive information hubs. Strengthening information literacy in rural areas will not only increase the impact of libraries but also empower individuals to make informed decisions in education, employment, agriculture, and health.

In conclusion, this research underscores the vital connection between information literacy and rural development. Investing in the improvement of library infrastructure, staff training, and user awareness programs will help bridge the rural-urban information divide and ensure that every citizen, regardless of location, has the opportunity to thrive in a knowledge-based society.

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